

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-25. (Cancelled)

26. (Previously Presented) A method for conducting an auction business through a computer network, the method comprising:

executing instructions with one or more processors, execution of the instructions causing the one or more processors to:

post by at least one seller on a computerized merchandise catalog information that is descriptive of a first lot of a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot of the plurality of lots including at least one item;

add a second lot to the plurality of lots during an auction of the first lot of the plurality of lots by posting on the computerized merchandise catalog information that is descriptive of items in the second lot, wherein the information pertaining to the second lot is added to the merchandise catalog as at least a portion of the first lot of the plurality of lots is made available for auction;

receive a bid from a bidder for at least the portion of the first lot of the plurality of lots;

validate a characteristic of the bid during and prior to a close of the auction of the first lot of the plurality of lots, the characteristic of the bid being a form of bid information, and the validating of the characteristic includes ensuring that the bid information accords with a specific form of the bid information that is defined by the bid format;

validate the bid to ensure that the bid amount is credible in view of a current high bid;

determine whether the bid for the at least the portion of the first lot is successful or unsuccessful; and

store an indication of whether the bid is successful or unsuccessful.

27. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 26, further comprising associating each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one selected from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the receiving further comprises the receiving the bid via a bid form.

30. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 26, further comprising the receiving an electronic message pertaining to at least the portion of the first lot and posting the electronic message in association with the descriptive information for the first lot.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the receiving further comprises receiving bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least two lots having different associated auction formats.

33. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 32, wherein the determining further comprises automatically categorizing the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with an associated auction format associated with each lot.

34. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 26, further comprising the automatically generating for at least the portion of the first lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.

35. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium containing instructions, which, when executed by a computer, causes a computer to perform an auction method comprising:
posting by at least one seller on a computerized merchandise catalog information that is descriptive of at least one of a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot having at least one item;

either adding items to or deleting items from a lot of the plurality of lots available for auction and posted to the merchandise catalog during an auction of another lot of the plurality of lots, wherein information relating to an item in the lot is added to or deleted from the merchandise catalog as items in each lot are to be either made available for auction or no longer available for auction;

receiving a bid for a portion of the lot from the plurality of lots from a bidder;

validating a characteristic of the bid during and prior to a close of the auction, wherein the characteristic of the bid is a form of bid information, and the validating of the characteristic includes ensuring that the bid information accords with a specific form of the bid information that is defined by the bid format;

validating the bid to ensure that the bid amount is credible in view of a current high bid; and

determining whether the received bid is successful or unsuccessful.

36. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising instructions for associating each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats so that at least two lots have different associated auction formats.

37. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 36, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one selected from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

38. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising instructions for receiving the bid for the lot from a bid form.

39. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising instructions for receiving a message pertaining to at least a portion of the lot and posting the message in association with the descriptive information for the lot.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, wherein the instructions for receiving further comprises instructions for receiving bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least two lots having different associated auction formats.

42. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 41, wherein the instructions for determining further comprises instructions for automatically categorizing the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with the associated format for each lot.

43. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising automatically generating for the portion of the lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.

44. (Previously Presented) A system for conducting an auction through a computer network, the system comprising:

a merchandise posting mechanism configured to post merchandise information from at least one seller, the information being accessible through the computer network and describing at least one of a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot including at least one item, the posting means available to add a lot of the plurality of lots for auction during an auction of another lot, the merchandise posting mechanism implemented with one or more processors configured to execute instructions;

a bid receiver to receive a bid for at least a portion of the lot of the plurality of lots, the bid receiver implemented with one or more processors configured to execute instructions;

a bid validator, during and prior to a close of the auction, to examine and validate a characteristic of the received bid and to store the bid in a bid database, and to ensure that a bid amount specified in the bid is credible in view of a current high bid, wherein the characteristic is a form of bid information, and the validating of the characteristic includes ensuring that the bid information accords with a specific form of the bid information that is defined by the bid format,

the bid validator implemented with one or more processors configured to execute instructions;
and

an auction manager that queries the bid database to automatically determine whether the bid is successful or unsuccessful.

45. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, further comprising an auction selector to associate each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats, at least two lots having different associated auction formats.

46. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 45, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

47. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, wherein the bid receiver receives the bid through a bid form.

48. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, wherein the merchandise posting mechanism is configured to receive a message posted through the computer network pertaining to at least the portion of the lot and to post the message in association with the descriptive information for the lot.

49. (Cancelled)

50. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, wherein the bid receiver receives bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least to lots having different associated auction formats.

51. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 50, wherein the auction manager automatically categorizes the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with the selected auction format for each lot.

52. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, further comprising proxy bidding means for automatically generating for the portion of the lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.